

OLD RUN NEWS
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Newsletter of the Middleton Railway Trust.

Number 50 March 1970.

FULL STEAM AHEAD AT MIDDLETON. The National Coal Board North Yorkshire Area were expected to hand over Middleton Broom buildings to us on 1st March. It so happened that their last day was Claud Hamilton's Birthday, the 20th February, and we turned up at 6 a.m. on the 21st to collect the keys from the Nightwatchman. He could not be found when we arrived and the Colliery manager delivered it in person later. As a result of the early changeover an ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK notice had to go out with the last newsletter, and though vandals have broken some windows and intruded, we have boarded up the damage and are working flat out with every available member to keep things under control. Lockable rooms are already being used for temporary stores. A Resurrection of the Tilley lamp has enabled us to hunt for intruders after dark. Malcolm Phillips has volunteered as Caretaker No 1, provided two other student members can move into the other bedrooms with him.

For a few days it was touch and go as a result of the early changeover. The next year will be very busy and every member capable of work of any kind should join in. Until we move in en bloc, the risk of vandalism remains. So far the constant hive of activity has been refreshing, but we must keep it up.

On Wednesday 4th February, the road access to Middleton Park was cleared of mud and the first train ran across to help with further relaying, which is at the moment held up by frozen ground conditions.

The plans for the South Eastern Motorway are approaching completion. Day after day has been spent in the City Engineer's Office amalgamating ideas plans and time tables for the scheme. The tunnel carrying us under the Motorway at a very skew angle will be of corrugated steel of a pre-fabricated semi-elliptical type. It will allow a full 15 feet overhead loading gauge, and a clear 7 feet each side of the line for shunters to walk in safety. The entrances will be stone faced as part of the general scheme to improve the appearance of the whole area as part of the Motorway project.

Although the Motorway will eclipse the remaining part of Denison's siding, space has been reserved for a short replacement running alongside the motorway to renew the access there, and permission for the construction work.

The Moor Road Level Crossing has been the subject of searching investigation. Only great care has avoided serious accidents during the last 10 years, and transfer of the 1901 relics to a museum, and replacement with simple and safe gates is being investigated. The liquidation of the Fireclay Company resulted in no documents being passed on to Clayton Son and Company when they bought this part of the line. The City Archives records showed that under an Act of 1874, and written agreements the City of Leeds was liable for the construction of the gates and fences, and any further work needed by raising of standards of the Board of Trade for level crossings. The Railway Company were responsible for maintaining the equipment and manning the Level Crossing. Advice from the British Railways Safety Officer has helped a great deal, and we have been as far away as the North Riding checking up on usable surplus Level Crossing equipment which would fit the site.

Disruption of railway traffic will be minimised. The section opposite Denison's is likely to be rebuilt in June of this year along with the tunnel over it, and the replacement of Dartmouth Curve by a new line avoiding the Motorway and reaching the main line near the edge of the Football Ground is planned for October. As far as possible new work will be laid in beforehand so that only the final connections will have to be laid in during the closure period. The spirit of the 1879 Act -- that the City Corporation may at no time hinder or obstruct the operation of the railway -- is being maintained, in fact at times the Leeds City Engineer's Motorway Office has resembled a Permanent Way Institution meeting!

About 60 yards of the Whitaker's line can be relaid to give us extra space, and the Burton Road level crossing will disappear. The problem of keeping rights of way to the Football Ground without the risk of mass intrusion on to the line is not finally settled. M R T members will realise that as we are one of many parties involved -- with ownership of both track and land being divided -- we can advise and recommend but not of course dictate. We have the advantage of knowing the laws and practices on railways very thoroughly. Throughout the negotiations we have asked for the basic essentials needed for safe operation and compliance with Ministry of Transport regulations, not for unnecessary ornamentation at the public expense. We think this is the proper attitude to take.

We regret to report that the demolition of the N C B electricity substation has made the old cables useless because water has been allowed to seep in. In any case the original 6,600 volt cables were used for 11,000 volt supplies and the substation was 100 yards from our nearest building. The expense of a new H.T. cable and substation was prohibitive. Site investigation with the Electricity Board has revealed that a small brick and concrete covered junction with the nearby 240 volt 3 phase supply, and a secondhand 4 core cable 180 yards long will just make the cost manageable, but as this will take time to arrange, we are looking for temporary diesel generator supplies. By getting the Leeds Waterworks to continue the supply at Middleton, we can keep the train service going between Middleton and the Motorway works by filling up locomotives there. The last month has been one of intense activity, not only manually but in negotiations on several schemes at once. At least one of our officers has put in a 40 hour week on M R T work on top of his ordinary employment.

D E A D L I N E - The Guillotine begins to slide down!

The long expected request for payment of the purchase price of the line from the Coal Board has come. The end of the financial year is March 31st. and the N C B can give no guarantee in respect of either the line or the buildings unless payment is made by that date. We cannot emphasize too strongly the urgency of fund raising by all members and by all means. The demand in cash per member is not as high as other Railway Preservation schemes have faced, and gifts or interest free loans must simply flood into the Appeal Fund at 11 Drummond Court Leeds 16 this month. The price asked is below the commercial value of the line, and we have had a clear 15 months grace from the Coal Board.

Diary of Events. The normal Easter Steam Gala is likely to be postponed to June and will certainly be the last use ever of Dartmouth field before Motorway work starts. John Carr is looking into details. The Annual General Meeting is planned for the first Saturday afternoon in May in the University, details will be circulated. London Area Group Lecture on Middleton 5 p.m. Imperial College Railway Society, S. Kensington, one of 3 lectures in 3 successive days in places 200 miles apart. Exhibition on local activities, at which we have been invited to appear, at Wetherby High School Saturday 21st March with film Titfield Thunderbolt or Oh! Mr. Porter. Walthamstow, London,

It is a regrettable fact that both membership numbers and sales of our publications do not boom, they merely creep up. Our lack of scenery and the fact that we also carry goods traffic cannot really be used to explain a membership of the order of 10% of some other preserved lines.

We should point out that M R T members get better service than many Societies for their subscriptions. 4 magazines a year plus Newsletters that are up to date and up to the minute with current events plus additional handouts is value for money.

We ask all members How many new members have you introduced in the last year? How many timetable leaflets have you passed on to places where they will do M R T some good? Have you contacted your area group Secretary to ask what help you can give?

The expanding prospects and facilities that are before us need a contemporary expansion of membership, otherwise we face too many jobs on too few shoulders. Action please all members.

Marston Radiators have kindly agreed to continue the facilities for our members working on the adjacent line that we enjoyed in Mr Hardy's time before the takeover.

Middleton the World Over.

We have to apologise to a member for assuming that Kensington Johannesburg was in South Africa. He tells us that though he IS in South Africa, there is another Jo'burg in the U S A! With a Leeds in Kent, London in Ontario, Halifax in Canada, Melbourne in Yorkshire and Cambridge, Washington in County Durham, we can't be too careful about correct addresses. We have no members that we know of at Timbuctoo or Rumblebellypore.

Member Chippendale writes to say he is in Anguila but will we continue to send mail to his home address.

One subscription was paid in East Carribean Dollars.

Alf Clarke tells us that though John Alcock was the first diesel to run on a British Main line Company, Hudswell Clarke produced a diesel for Chile in 1931 with McLaren Benz equipment.

Some spare places are available in the visit to York signalbox Saturday 14th March, please contact the Chairman.

Clapham Open Day. Special Sunday Opening for Railway Specialists. 12th April.

Malcolm Phillips has discovered a North Eastern push-pull coach of short wheelbase and capable of adaptation as a safe and reliable improvement on our Brakevan train. He has offered (subject to the price being reasonable) to purchase it for use on Middleton Railway, provided that in response some effort is made to put it under cover. A generous offer like this, if accepted, does imply hard work by us on the protective cover. It has been clear that the existing rolling stock space at Middleton is not large enough for all our property. Extra facilities are being investigated, but details will have to await clarification of the situation.

26th. April, Great Eastern Centenary and exhibition on the local branch line. We have been invited to loan our large collection of G E R relics, and contribute to the published history. It may seem out of our line of country, but it so happens that the locomotive bought for use on Middleton was not only the last ever built at Stratford G E R works, but it spent most of its working life as L N E R No. 7999 at the Wood St. Walthamstow shed, working the world's busiest steam service. The fact that a Walthamstow loco. still existed produced the invitation to us. M R T members Howlett at Leyton and Warner at Ilford are on the doorstep and John Carr is looking into the M R T exhibit there.

MISCELLANY. The boom in goods traffic has been maintained. The Sentinel has been running weekend visitors trains extremely well since its gear repair. Member C H Oldroyd of Leeds 6 said "It is too easy just to pay one's subscription sit back and read all the publications and then do nothing useful for the M R T." He promptly appeared at a time when 1200 Old Runs had to be assembled at about 4 per minute. This drives home the fact that there are plenty of M R T tasks within the capacity of most members.

The M R T Treasurer asks that members be a little more cooperative in responding to requests for information. In one case we know there was a delay in replying of 2 months. He also asks that copies of all invoices be sent to him for record purposes.

We welcome Sheffield University Transport Society as a new member. They were even talking of permanent way working parties!

A 3 wagon train of converted Laporte wagons is ready for service and the other train is nearing completion.

Visiting parties continue, some even requiring extra wagons to be ordered.

In view of our Connection with Flying Scotsman by virtue of the relics we produce, we have been asked to send all members the enclosed leaflet.

Austrian Steam Railways. A company called Phonix Reisen Gesellschaft Mit Beschreibsten Heftung, of 1171 Wien Hernalser Haupstrasse 168 Postfach 164, Austria, has asked us to publicise their holidays and tours centred on steam and old railways of interest to the enthusiasts.

Railway Letters. British Railways have had difficulty with letters sent by train, and originating on private lines which take the fee for the whole journey. After investigation with the G P O we find there appears to be no objection to letters bearing a G P O and a Middleton Stamp being carried by us and handed over, both stamps being franked. Philatelic requests for this have come to us. G P O Leeds have offered a special date stamp on the 10th Anniversary of Middleton reopening so that our own and philatelic letters can have the special cancellation, either on plain envelopes or commemorative covers. It appears that philatelists have been paying high prices for such things as 2/6d stamped letters dated 31.12.69, the last day of the half crown! G P O London HQ have considered the idea of historic locomotives on stamps, and will consult us when this comes to fruition.

Publications Membership and sales. As we forecast in the last newsletter, a speed-up of publication has brought the Old Run up to date. The Editor hopes to produce quality illustrated issues simply packed with page after page of good reading matter. Please back him up and help him sell more Old Runs. The Newsletter Editor reminds readers that items should be in by the 25th of the month. If the Newsletter degenerates into a monologue of the Editor members have only themselves to blame.